

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 13830, of St. John's Development Center, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.42 to add two portable classroom buildings to serve an existing private school in an R-1-B District at the premises 5005 MacArthur Blvd., N. W., (Square 1410, Lot 833).

HEARING DATE: October 13, 1982
DECISION DATES: November 3 and December 1, 1982

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject site is located in an R-1-B District at the northeast corner of the intersection of MacArthur Boulevard and Chain Bridge Road, N. W. To the northeast is a large wooded cemetery, to the southeast is Glover Archibald Park and to the southwest, west and northwest are detached single-family dwellings. The zoning surrounding the site is R-1-B.

2. The subject property consists of 69,280 square feet of land area. It is currently developed with two two-story classroom buildings, a small one-story classroom building, and a shop and greenhouse building. A paved parking area for forty-two cars is located on the north side of the principal classroom building.

3. The subject site slopes up rapidly from MacArthur Boulevard along and near Chain Bridge Road. On the northern side of the property, where the parking area is located, the grade of the site is more similar to that of MacArthur Boulevard.

4. Entry to the site is from MacArthur Boulevard.

5. The school currently has a certificate of occupancy, No. B-56203, dated May 3, 1906, allowing use of a day school with a maximum enrollment of 125. The school has an existing enrollment of fifty-nine students. There is a total of forty-seven full and part time staff. The school was approved by the BZA in Appeals No. 7540 and 8221.

6. St. John's Child Development Center is a private, non-profit facility for handicapped individuals ages four through adult. The school offers a comprehensive, individualized educational program for two types of

handicapped conditions: (1) mental retardation, and (2) autism/severely and profoundly handicapped. Each program includes not only academic instruction but also an array of related services such as physical and speech therapies, psychological counseling and adaptive physical education. The school is the only facility in the District of Columbia metropolitan area which the D. C. Government's Contracts Office recognizes as having a program specifically for autistic persons.

7. There are thirteen classrooms in the existing facility. Due to the nature of the students' handicaps, the maximum class size is five students. Each class has a special education teacher and an educational assistant.

8. The applicant proposes to locate two portable classroom buildings on the property. Such facilities are to be sited in an area near the one-story classroom building, in the northeast corner of the site near Chain Bridge Road.

9. The programs to be located in the two portable classroom buildings will be primarily for students who are autistic and/or severely and profoundly handicapped.

10. The two modular units will accommodate an increase in staff of up to eight persons and in students of up to twenty children. Total enrollment of the private school after the addition of these two units will be seventy-nine students. Total staff would not exceed fifty-five employees. The expanded enrollment is still well below the level authorized by the present certificate of occupancy.

11. The hours of operation of the school will remain the same as at present, from 8:15 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

12. The addition of the portable classrooms as proposed is within the allowed lot area, lot width, lot occupancy and rear yard requirements of the Zoning Regulations for the R-1-B District.

13. At present, students arrive at the school by use of five private cars, four cabs and ten school buses. There will be no need for additional buses, because twenty additional students can be accommodated on the buses already in use.

14. The addition of eight staff persons would have no material affect on traffic on MacArthur Boulevard, which is a major arterial street carrying an average of 1,350 vehicles during the peak hours.

15. The school would be required to provide two off-street parking spaces for each three teachers and other

employees. For fifty-five employees, thirty-seven spaces are required. The school has a parking area containing forty-two spaces. The parking lot is adequate for all teachers, other employees and visitors, both at present and with the expansion.

16. The portable classrooms will be set back twenty-eight and thirty-nine feet from Chain Bridge Road, and twenty-five and seventy-five feet from the adjoining cemetery property to the northeast. The classroom buildings will not be visible from MarArthur Boulevard and will be difficult to see from Chain Bridge Road. From MacArthur Boulevard, the sharp change in elevation on the site makes this location impossible to see from the sidewalk in front of the property. From Chain Bridge Road, the natural vegetation and the winding nature of the road will make visibility of these units difficult.

17. The portable classroom buildings will be one-story steel framed construction, twelve feet wide by sixty feet long. Each building contains two classrooms. The exterior material will be a brown earth-tone color to blend in with the trees and the existing buildings. The exterior facade will be as shown on Exhibit No. 24 of the record.

18. The applicant intends to plant additional landscaping and screening to enhance the buildings and provide a buffer between the buildings and the edges of the property. Such landscaping is shown on Exhibit No. 22A of the record.

19. The Office of Planning and Development, by memorandum dated October 8, 1982 and by testimony at the hearing, recommended that the application be approved. The OPD reported that any noise increase will not be objectionable because of the location of the play area, that traffic in the area would not be significantly impacted, that the total enrollment would not constitute an overdevelopment of the site and that the number of parking spaces meets the requirements of Article 72. The OPD found a potential visual impact from the project and recommended the applicant avoid any potential impact with a landscape plan. The Board concurs with the findings of the OPD.

20. There was no report received from Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3-D.

21. A neighbor of the school at 5024 MacArthur Boulevard, N. W. supported the application, citing the positive operations of the school in the past and the benefits of expanding the school's programs.

22. The Palisades Citizens Association, by letter dated October 8, 1982, advised that it did not oppose the application. The Association requested that appropriate

landscaping be installed to screen views from public streets. The Association noted that it would be appropriate for the BZA to limit approval to what is requested and to grant the exception for a limited period such as five or six years. The Board agrees.

23. The applicant testified that it intended to reassess the need for the portable classrooms in five or six years, and might not need them at that time.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception, the granting of which requires that the applicant prove that it has met the requirements of Paragraph 3101.42 and Sub-section 8207.2. The Board concludes that the applicant has met its burden of proof. The proposed use is so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby properties, is so designed that noise, traffic, light and other potentially adverse conditions will be eliminated or controlled and is so developed that ample parking spaces will be provided to accommodate all teachers, other staff and visitors who are likely to come to the site by automobile. In particular, any potential visual impact will be avoided by the landscaping proposed by the applicant in Exhibit No. 22A. The Board further concludes that the special exception is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and maps and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring properties. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is hereby GRANTED SUBJECT to the following CONDITIONS:

1. Approval shall be for a period of FIVE YEARS from the date of this order.
2. The property shall be landscaped in accordance with the plan marked as Exhibit No. 22A of the record. Such landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy growing condition and shall be replaced as necessary.
3. There shall be a maximum of seventy-nine students and fifty-five employees.
4. The exterior material of the portable classrooms shall be earth-tone or stained wood or metal siding, as shown on Exhibit No. 24 of the record.

VOTE on the application: 5-0 (William F. McIntosh, Connie Fortune, Maybelle Taylor Bennett, Douglas J. Patton and Charles R. Norris to grant.)

Vote on the exterior material: 4-0 (Douglas J. Patton,
William F. McIntosh and
Charles R. Norris to
approve, Maybelle Taylor
Bennett to approve by
proxy, Connie Fortune,
not present, not voting.)

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY: 
STEVEN E. SHER
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: FEB 17 1983

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS, "NO
DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN
DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL
RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING
ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS
AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH
PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE
OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES,
INVESTIGATIONS AND INSPECTIONS.

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